

UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED BASIN

MILL CREEK SUBCOMMITTEE

August 14, 2008 - 1:00PM
St. John's Church, Emigrant

-MINUTES-

People Present (21+)

Alan Redfield, Chairman
Elaine Hale, Vice Chair
Susan Gilbertz, MSU Billings
Marty Malone
Laura Melin
Jim Robinson, DNRC
Katie Gaut, MT Water Trust
Dave Poncin
Scott Optiz, FWP
Eleanor Bossert
Ed Bigenho
Norma Shapero

Jacquie Nelson, Coordinator
Lynda Moss
Art Burns
Keith Neal
Lewis Wilks
Sharon Sweeney Fee, Joe Brook T.U.
Kerry Fee, Joe Brook T.U.
Riley Shimmin
Ryan Malone
Caryl Bigenho
Melissa Kearn
Meredith Allen

Topics Covered:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. MINUTES | 6. MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED |
| 2. USBR GRANT APPLICATION | 7. FOREST SERVICE UPDATE |
| 3. MILL CREEK MONITORING | 8. CULTURE RESOURCE INVENTORY |
| 4. DITCH RECLAMATION | 9. NEXT MEETING DATE |
| 5. DROUGHT RELIEF FUNDS | 10. OPEN ITEMS |

Alan Redfield called the Mill Creek Subcommittee meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

1. MINUTES

- The minutes from the April 18, 2008 Mill Creek Subcommittee meeting were approved as proposed.

2. USBR GRANT APPLICATION

- The previous draft Reclamation States Emergency Drought Act Grant Application for Mill Creek written by Jim Robinson, DNRC was denied by the Upper Yellowstone Watershed Basin (UYWB) at their May 1, 2008 monthly meeting (**Note:** Please refer to the UYWB minutes dated 5/1/08 for more information).
- Jim Robinson, approached the Mill Creek Subcommittee group with the idea to take the opportunity to apply for the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) again but with different objectives.
- The objective of the USBR funds would be to create a drought relief program that will include installing monitoring system(s), generate water efficiency projects, reclaim damaged headgates and any other efforts to relieve drought.
- **Snotel (Snowpack Telemetry):** Currently, there are two Snotel sites up the Mill Creek watershed that are read manually. Therefore, folks in the area most likely rely on surrounding automated Snotel sites for up to date information. Jim Robinson displayed a map and spreadsheet of active Snotel sites in and around Park County, with Box Canyon and Monument Peak being the closest to the Mill Creek watershed. The Snotel readings would help indicate the how much water will be in the creek that year and it helps irrigators plan for the upcoming summer

UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED BASIN

MILL CREEK SUBCOMMITTEE

season. However, every monitoring option requires maintenance costs. The Snotel site would require a forest service permit. It might be beneficial to talk to NRCS about funding opportunities and maintaining the equipment. Jim Robinson suggested inviting Keizer, DNRC to talk about the benefits and disadvantages of Snotel sites.

- **AgriMet (Agriculture and Meteorology):** Jim Robinson discussed the idea of installing an automated, near real-time station that measures evaporation on the ground. This device can track rainfall at a particular spot and give the landowner water use information to potentially increase irrigation efficiency. This information could be displayed on the internet and accessible to the public. The Bureau of Reclamation grant would help fund for the maintenance of this project.
- The governor's drought committee met on August 14, 2008 in Helena and some of the Mill Creek Subcommittee members thought the group needs to starting talking to this committee about Mill Creek.
- **Motion:** Kerry Fee, Joe Brook Trout Unlimited, made the motion to bring before the UYWB and vote on applying for a USBR grant requesting Snotel, Agrimet stations and stream gauges. Elaine Hale seconded the motion. Marty Malone made an amendment to the motion. The amendment to the original motion reads, to bring before the UYWB and vote on applying for a USBR grant requesting a variety of drought relief projects including but not limited to Snotel, Agrimet stations, stream gauges, and Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network rain gauges (CoCoRaHS). The amendment passed. Elaine Hale seconded the motion with the addition of the amendment. Discussion included Sharon Sweeney Fee suggesting to put together a proposal with the above ideas. Jim Robinson volunteered to have a proposal for the UYWB monthly meeting on Sept. 4, 2008 and present it on behalf of the Mill Creek Subcommittee. The discussion ended and the motion passed.

3. MILL CREEK MONITORING

- Dave Amman was unable to attend the Mill Creek Subcommittee meeting, therefore Jim Robinson filled in for him.
- Jim Robinson discussed the ongoing flow monitoring consisting of 10 water measurement stations at strategic points along the lower six miles of Mill Creek, flow measurements are listed below:
 - No. 1 – Mill Creek East River Road: 73 cfs
 - No. 2 – Allen Sexton Ditch: 3 cfs
 - No. 3 – Mill Creek 1st Bridge, Mill Creek Road: 85 cfs
 - No. 4 – Mill Creek, above Carters: 97 cfs
 - No. 5 – Carters Ditch: 1-2 cfs
 - No. 6 – Mill Creek, 2nd Bridge, USGS Gauge: N/A
 - No. 7 – Upland Ditch: < 1 cfs
 - No. 8 – Mill Creek, above Pipeline Intake: 189 cfs
 - No. 9 – Northside Ditch: 39 cfs
 - No. 10 – Pipeline: 50 cfs
- There were three new water level recorders installed on August 5, 2008.
- As of August 5, 2008 there has been very minimal water loss and conveyance loss out of the canyon.
- This data will be displayed on the DNRC Mill Creek website (Note: address located on the bottom of each page).

4. DITCH RECLAMATION

UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED BASIN

MILL CREEK SUBCOMMITTEE

- Pat Riley was unable to attend the Mill Creek Subcommittee meeting, therefore Jim Robinson filled in for him.
- **Mill Flat Headgate:** This headgate was replaced by the Mill Creek pipeline; therefore, no water flows down the ditch. It is in poor condition and Alan Redfield is worried that if the headgate blew out, water could end up in landowner's yards.
- **Upland Ditch Headgate:** This headgate is in pretty good shape. Not very much water passes through this headgate.
- Pat Riley researched funding opportunities and found that the Reclamation and Development program would be the best. The reclamation projects can be part of a larger engineering analysis. Pat was suppose to supply prices and development numbers to the UYWB, Mill Creek Subcommittee but has not yet given those numbers to the group.
- The Mill Creek Subcommittee agreed to add the Mill Creek headgate reclamation plan to the USBR grant application.

5. DROUGHT RELIEF FUNDS

- Jacquie Nelson mentioned to the group that in 2006 the UYWB purchased ten AM400 soil moisture data logger units and not all have been used as of today. These data loggers can help the water users improve their irrigation management decision-making, and improve the overall efficiency of the irrigation system. The Am400 is a powerful irrigation scheduling tool that can allow the landowner to achieve an increase in crop yield and quality while reducing water, pumping and fertilizer cost. It automatically records readings every eight hours from six Watermark soil moisture sensors located up to 1,000 feet away. The landowner can view soil moisture graphs to determine soil moisture level.
- Marty Malone helped describe how the soil data loggers work and how to use them.
- If you are interested in learning more about soil moisture data loggers or would like to install one on your property, contact Jacquie Nelson at 222-2899 ext.111.

6. MONTANA TROUT UNLIMITED

- Kerry Fee and Sharon Sweeney Fee presented on behalf of the local Joe Brooks chapter of Montana Trout Unlimited. Kerry Fee is interested in looking into applying for some of the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) funds. These funds are not allocated yet, however, 30 million dollars was appointed for project in the Upper Yellowstone. Kerry talked to Senator Max Baucus about using a portion of the money towards Mill Creek and he thought it Mill Creek watershed has a good chance in receiving some funds.
- Sharon Sweeney Fee would like to set up a meeting in the fall (October) with several representatives (Army Corps of Engineers, landowners from UYWB and SVWG) to talk about the WRDA money and potential projects. She would like to get an application in this January. The money would not be available until 2010; if the group waits until after February, the next opportunity won't be until 2011.
- The WRDA grant would be a 65/45 in-kind match. The group talked about potential projects with the Northside ditch being one of them; installing a pipeline.

7. FOREST SERVICE UPDATE

- Livingston District Ranger, Ron Archuleta was unable to attend. However, he supplied a written report that Alan Redfield read on behalf of the Forest Service on the Wicked Fire damage and rehabilitation efforts.

UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED BASIN

MILL CREEK SUBCOMMITTEE

- **Note:** Please see attached document for more information (Wicked BAER Update_8.14.08.doc).

8. CULTURE RESEARCH INVENTORY

- Susan Gilbertz, PhD Asst. Professor of Geography and Director of Environmental Studies at MSU – Billings presented about the Mill Creek cultural resource inventory proposal for submittal to the DNRC 223 grant program.
- Susan studies people's attachment to places. She works in qualitative research not quantitative. The Mill Creek Subcommittee would be able to come up with the protocol such as focusing on headgates, history etc. The group can pick the 20 representatives to be interviewed or it can be random. However, it will be hard to keep the names confidential.
- The deadline for the 223 application is August 28th or October 1st.
- **Note:** Please see attached documents for a detailed cultural resource inventory proposal (MC_Cultural_Inventory_App.doc & MC_Informed_ Consent.doc).
- **Motion:** Elaine Hale made the motion to entertain this cultural inventory study to the UYWB. Lynda Moss seconded.
- Discussion was as follows: Marty Malone discussed water rights education and sending out letters with water rights facts to the watershed. A discussion was held as to what the benefits and disadvantages of the cultural inventory study are.
- A vote was taken on the motion to entertain this cultural inventory study to the UYWB; the motion failed to pass the Mill Creek Subcommittee.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

- Marty Malone thinks the Mill Creek Subcommittee should be meeting more frequently.
- The next meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2008, 1-3 pm.

10. OPEN ITEMS

- No open items were discussed.

Alan Redfield adjourned the Mill Creek Subcommittee meeting at 3:15 PM.